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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 10 February 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to draw your attention to several recent incidents in the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terrorism directed against Israeli citizens.

On 5 February, Palestinian terrorists attacked an Israel Defense Forces post located at Har Grizim with automatic gunfire and hand grenades. Lieutenant Amir Ben-Arye, age 21, and Staff Sergeant Idan Suzin, age 21, were killed in the exchange, and two other soldiers were wounded. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the terrorist unit of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's own Fatah movement, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine both claimed responsibility for the attack.

Yesterday morning, 9 February, a car bomb exploded near an IDF position in Gush Katif, wounding four soldiers. The car was packed with 150 kilograms of explosives and 10 mortar shells. Three terrorists riding in the car who were members of Islamic Jihad were killed in the explosion.

In addition, Israel has successfully thwarted scores of attempted attacks on civilian targets in recent weeks. On 28 January, the day of Israel's recent general election, the IDF foiled a number of planned terrorist attacks, among them an attempt by Islamic Jihad to detonate four car bombs simultaneously at various locations inside Israel. The IDF also prevented several attempts by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to dispatch suicide bombers into Israel from Nablus, the villages of Tamun and Tubas, and from Gaza.

Last week, Israel prevented another attempted attack when two Palestinian terrorists were arrested in northern Israel. The terrorists led Israeli security personnel to a belt of explosives of the type used by suicide bombers that had been hidden in a mosque. Israeli sappers were able to remove the 15 kilograms of explosives attached to the belt, which were packed with nails and other projectiles to

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maximize the pain and suffering of the victims, and to detonate them safely, preventing damage to civilians as well as the mosque structure.

The above provides but a glimpse of the ongoing challenges facing Israeli security personnel as they work to prevent terrorist attacks. Almost every day, a planned attack is thwarted by Israeli security personnel. Had Israel's counter-terrorist measures not been in place, scores of Palestinian terrorists would have successfully infiltrated Israel and countless innocent lives would have been lost. These examples further underscore not only the absolute necessity of Israel's preventive actions, but also the continuing failure of the Palestinian leadership to take any action whatsoever to prevent terrorist attacks emanating from its territory.

Rather than acting to suppress acts of terrorism — which is their obligation under international law, Security Council resolutions, as well as signed commitments reached with Israel — the Palestinian leadership continues, at every opportunity, to express its support for acts of violence against Israeli civilians. As long as murderers are glorified as martyrs, and attacking civilians is perceived as legitimate, the phenomenon of Palestinian terrorism is bound to continue, endangering the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis and placing ever greater obstacles on the road to peace. Israel calls upon the international community to make clear its absolute rejection of terrorist tactics and to insist that the Palestinian Authority act to stop all acts of violence and terrorism, in accordance with its obligations under international law and signed agreements.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the Palestinian leadership must be held accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Arye **Mekel**
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.